Towards a Culture of Peace:
A comparative Study of Some Selected Novels

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Introduction

Peace does not necessarily mean peace between countries or nations. Rather, it is much more needed in society, family groups and neibourhoods. It can be achieved first and foremost through the acquisition of a new behaviour based on love, respect and the acceptance of the other: to live peacefully and leaving the others to live peacefully too, and to treat others as you want to be treated. There is a much need to develop a culture of peace and tolerance through literature to counteract the culture of war and intolerance. Peace can be realised through literature and culture by establishing strong links between people at the deepest level in the depths of their lives. Similarly, if we are to build a more peaceful culture, we must both use imagination and face current reality, and this can be achieved through literature.

Boulding (2000) points out that our warlike culture is accompanied with a concurrent culture of peace. We are taught a history of power and conquest. Our religions portray a holy war against evil, and our minds are so full of violent images and language that are difficult for us to imagine a peaceful culture and believe in its possibility. Yet, much actual history is of a peaceful nature. Our religions also portray peaceful gardens that cultivate the oneness of humanity and are sanctuaries of nonviolence. Our minds know that we are interdependent and must learn to live with one another. In a culture of peace, people behave in ways that promote mutual caring and wellbeing. These behaviours are supported by particular institutional arrangements, and they reflect particular societal norms and values. Boulding (2000) observes that such a culture attempts to offer mutual security by acknowledging the importance of diversity and the appreciation of our human identity.

Samuel Huntington(1993) argues that, since the end of the Cold War, the significant divide that is found in societies no longer reflects ideological, political or economic systems, but cultural differences. In other words, it is the confrontation of identities that matters in the post-Cold War world. Lenin saw "war communism" as a temporary policy that must not be continued. At the *Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party* in March 1921, he called for a new policy: "Up to now we have been adapting ourselves to the tasks of war; we must now adapt ourselves to the conditions of peace.

Emanuel Aguis and Jolant Ambrosewics (2003) argue that the history of civilisation is a history of constant warfare, destruction, conquest and violence and not of prosperity, peace and development. To them, the twenty century surpassed all the previous centuries in terms of violence and cruelty. Thus, the twenty-first century has put humanity into dilemma.

The culture of war and intolerance in all its manifestations became one of the greatest evils for humankind. Human kind has to make a transition from the culture of war and violence to a culture of peace and harmony. A culture of peace must be developed as a result of this transition, as a process of spiritual enrichment of every single individual and entire society. As a result, the existing ideas of peace will become personal, moral and spiritual values of each and every individual. They will form his/her ideology, direct his/her creative thinking and capabilities. Only through this culture will it be possible to prevent the destruction of family, society, country, and civilisation.

The term 'Comparative Literature' is difficult to define for it evolves not one but two or even more than two literatures in comparison at the same time. It becomes still more difficult task when the comparatist has to take into consideration the multi-dimensional aspects of comparative literature such as-linguistic, cultural, religious, economic, social and historical factors of different societies. Etymologically, the term comparative literature denotes any literary work or works when compared with any other literary work or works. Hence, comparative literature is the study of inter-relationship between any two or more than two significant literary works or literatures. It is essential that while making comparative study we must take the sources, themes, myths, forms, artistic strategies, social and religious movements and trends into consideration. The comparatist with his/her critical approach and investigations will find out the similarities and dissimilarities among various works that he/she has undertaken for the purpose of comparison. The justification lies in the fact that his/her approach must be unbiased and unprejudiced to reach the ultimate truth. It is only his/her earnest and sincere approach which will bring forth the naked truth or natural results and this really is the purpose of comparative study.

Besides, comparative literature is a comprehensive term. Its scope encompasses the totality of human experiences into its embrace, and thus all internal human relationships among the various parts of the world are realized through the critical approach to literatures under comparative study. It helps to vanish narrow national and international boundaries. Thus, the term comparative literature includes comparative study of regional literatures, national literatures, and international literatures. The comparative study is not different from a critical approach of a particular literature except the fact that here we deal with two or more than two literatures side by side. Boundaries of comparative literature have to be extended to encompass the entirety of human life and experiences in one's embrace.

Therefore, this dissertation aims to compare four modern novels by four novelists from different countries with different cultural and ideological backgrounds. These novels are: *Riot* by Shashi Tharoor(2001), *Birds Without Wings* (2004) by Louis De Bernieres, *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) by Chimamanda Zgozi Adichie, and *The Handsome Jew* (2009) by Ali Al-Muqri. This can be achieved by comparing the themes, plot, characters and context of the four novels as well as the approaches, views and attitudes of the four novelists.

Statement of the problem

In a world where many regions suffer from increasing tensions, conflicts and violence, to make peace a tangible reality is of critical importance. Ethnonationalism, xenophobia, racism and discrimination against minority groups, religious extremism and violations of human rights are the causes of an increasing number of local and regional conflicts. Besides, there are cultural, ideological, gender, economic, imperial and capitalist reasons for conflict. The present culture of violence based on distrust, suspicion, intolerance and hatred, on the inability to interact constructively with all those who are different must be replaced by a new culture based on non-violence, tolerance, mutual understanding and solidarity, on the ability to solve peacefully disputes and conflicts.

Most of the people and scholars have a misleading idea that the maximum number of wars and killing have happened mainly in the name of religion. They claim that religions are responsible for the maximum amount of conflict. They are blaming religion for these conflicts and violence without searching for the other causes and factors of conflict. It is assumed that religions have been and still a source of peace. Religions do not create conflict, violence, or hatred but people themselves do create conflict by their greed, hypocrisy and selfishness. The political power in any country can use religion as an authority to justify its system of rule. People fail to understand religion as an institution and that it prevents them to use it to justify war and conflict.

Hypothesis

In the initial years of the twenty-first century, the world peace has been broken by the emergence of terrorism and new threats of conflict in various regions around the globe. There have been many conflicts in societies and people have been seeking to find solutions to these clashes. It is said that the fundamental source of conflict nowadays is religion. The researcher assumes that religion is not the primarily source of conflict. That is, there are cultural, ideological, gender, economic, ethnic, imperial and capitalist reasons for conflict. The researcher also assumes that a culture of peace and tolerance can be developed through novels to counteract the culture of war and intolerance. Peace can be disseminated through novels and culture.

This study will answer the following questions: Is religion responsible for cultural conflicts? What are the main causes and factors of conflict? If the existence of different religions is the primary source of conflict, what about the conflicts that have been taking place where people do not belong to any religion or belong to the same religion? What are the other factors and reasons of cultural conflict? What is the vital role that novelists can play in building a culture of peace? How can novels be used to convey the heavenly message of peace? How can cultural, ideological, gender, economic, imperial and capitalist conflicts be reflected in novels? Do globalisation and capitalism contribute to the cultural conflict?

Objectives of the Study

Since novel is the most widely read nowadays, it allows us to transmit the profound meanings of a determinate culture and its stereotypes, creating the possibility of social change and bringing about a culture of peace. Hence, this study aims to foster a greater understanding of the unique and often underestimated role that the novelists can play in peacebuilding strategies. Furthermore, this thesis deals with the culture of peace and the role of modern novelists in disseminating and creating a culture of peace in their novels. It carries out a comparative study of four modern novels and how the impact of war and cultural conflict is represented in them and how such representations contribute to the discourses of peace and conflict.

Moreover, this thesis compares how each novelist includes his/her ideas and views about the culture of peace and non-violence from different perspectives. Thus, the novelists can plays a

vital role in depicting the effects of cultural, ideological, and social conflict. In addition, the role of the novelists is to reveal the impact of war and conflict on people and children. Also, this thesis aims at highlighting the role of the novelists in promoting the culture of peace through their novels in order to reframe the public discourses for a transformation of thinking, attitudes, and practices.

The importance of the Study

Most of the studies and researches focus on the role of media in building a culture of peace. The present study deals with novels and their relation to the culture of peace. Not only media can contribute to the culture of peace but novels as well. Novels can have a great contribution to the culture of peace as they are widely read and are being adopted into popular movies. Novels enable novelists to introduce their ideas, approaches, attitudes and opinions about peace, tolerance and nonviolence.

This thesis focuses on religious fanaticism, gender and the aspects of sociocultural conflict in the four novels. The four novels are based on the events that happened in the past. The purpose of choosing these four novels is because they are based on real events that account a peaceful coexistence between people of different cultures, religions, languages and ethnicity who have been living together for centuries and that an expected incident has led to communal strife. The findings of this thesis will be useful to those promoting peace in different social, economic and political settings around the world, and in particular for countries where religion, in one form or another, appears to be entangled in a large number of conflicts and zones of instability.

Also, this thesis hopes to prove the importance of novels in disseminating the culture of peace and nonviolence. It will show what a role novelists can play in helping to create and sustain a culture of peace. Thus, in a world where cultures increasingly converge and intermingle with each other, the role of novelists is to include notions of culture of peace in their novels.

The Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study aims to compare four novels only written by different novelists. It is limited to the genre of novel—the four novelists and their selected novels. Within its limited scope, the study will focus on the aspects of the culture of peace and how it is represented in these four novels. Also, the scope of this study is limited by the selected novels written between the period 2000 and 2010. This study will discuss the sociocultural, gender, ethical conflict, the religious fanaticism and how the novelists deal with these issues in their novels and what views they provide regarding the culture of peace. This study selects four novelists from India, Yemen, Nigeria, and England to compare their views about the culture of peace.

Research Methodology

This dissertation aims to compare four modern novels with different cultural and ideological backgrounds. Research Methods adopted in this study are comparative, descriptive, exploratory, and analytical methods. The argument is carried throughout by following the two methods of logical thinking—Inductive and Deductive.

There has been a growing emphasis on difference in the cultural field, and in particular on questions of gender, race and nationality. Gender has a significant influence on conflict and peacemaking behaviour. Another 'politics of difference' which has received increasing attention within cultural studies is that of race and ethnicity in postcolonial times. Postcolonial approach will be followed to examine the role of colonialism in the sociocultural conflict. Maxian theory will be used to analyse class conflict. Derrida's theory of deconstruction will be used to analyse the text of the four novels from different perspectives. Theories of race, ethnicity, orientalism and Gramscian's theory of hegemony will also be included in this comparative study.

A good deal of cultural studies is centred on questions of representation; that is, on how the world is socially constructed and represented to and by us in meaningful ways. Indeed, the central strand of cultural studies can be understood as the study of culture as the signifying practices of representation. This requires us to explore the textual generation of meaning. It also demands investigation of the modes by which meaning is produced in a variety of contexts. Further, cultural representations and meanings have a certain materiality. That is, they are embedded in sounds, inscriptions, objects, images, novels, books, magazines and

television programmes. They are produced, enacted, used and understood in specific social contexts. Thus, novels can vividly reflect the cultural representations and will attract the attention of the readers.

Indeed, readers will not necessarily share all the same meanings with each other. Critics, in other words, are simply a particular breed of reader. Further, texts, as forms of representation, are polysemic. That is, they contain the possibility of a number of different meanings that have to be realized by actual readers who give life to words and images and the ways in which texts work can be examined and critically analysed. Consequently, the moment of consumption is also a moment of meaningful production. Finally, theories of translation are used to translate the Yemeni novel *The Handsome Jew* by Ali Al Muqri from Arabic into English for the purpose of study as translation is of paramount importance in comparative studies of world literatures as well as regional literatures. Without successful translation the comparative approach will miscarry. Moreover, the comparatist who compares two literary works written in two different languages must be bi-lingnal as well as a successful translator.

Existing Studies

Most of the existing studies discussed the role of media and television in spreading the culture of peace. However, these studies failed to problematize the factors and reasons of conflict arising from gender, religion, racism, capitalism, and colonialism. For example, Hyat Ahmed Abdelamalik Mohamed in her *'Media and peace Building in the Era of Globalisation'* examines the extent to which globalisation has enhanced the capacity of journalism and the media to build peace and harmony in the modern world. To her, globalisation is changing the nature of journalism, furthering the development of new forms of journalism such as citizen journalism. She also argues that the efforts of the media of peace and harmony can also be seen to benefit from globalisation and new media technology. The media have played their role in promoting conflict as well as enhancing peace, or protecting human rights. She only examines the power of the media in contributing to peace, and reducing military action, whether local, regional or international. Hence, it is important to discuss the media's role in war and conflict situations.

Dov Shinar's article *' The Peace Process in Cultural Conflict: The Role of Media'* explores the cultural nature of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the intractability of cultural conflict, reconciliation/end-of-conflict versus conflict transformation and their relation to cultural

conflict, the changing role of media in international relations and the possibility of the media contributing to peace processes. To him, unlike the other violent confrontations, the Middle East conflict is fundamentally cultural and that cultural conflicts are intractable in the sense they are difficult, perhaps impossible to be resolved and he concludes stating that the media can play important roles in policy-making, public opinions and peacebuilding. Similarly, Nisreen Mohammed Abdukaziz's *' The Role of the Egyptian Drama in Disseminating Culture of Peace through Satellite Channels'* discusses the role of media and television in spreading the culture of peace.

Also, Mai Nguyen's *'Causes of Ethnic Conflict: Examining the Role of Religious Diversity and Contagion Effects'* argues that the religious composition of the population affects the likelihood of ethnic conflict within a nation-state, and that religious diversity is a significant factor in determining how likely a state is to experience ethnic conflict. To her, ethnic conflicts have long been a component of international politics. Even today, ethnic wars continue to be the most common form of armed conflicts around the world. In the recent past for example, there have been numerous instances of ethnic conflict including ethnic war in Somalia, Kurdish struggle for autonomy in Iraq, Iran and Turkey, guerilla wars in El Salvador and Nicaragua, insurrection in Chechnya, and the conflict between Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda. He further posits that ethnic conflict is a result of globalization bringing multiple cultures in contact with each other.

Daniel Bar-Tal's *'Reconciliation as a Foundation of Culture of Peace* ' examines the nature of reconciliation as a foundation of a culture of peace. He describes the nature of a culture of conflict, then elaborates on the nature of the reconciliation needed for a culture of peace, and finally describes the needed process of achieving reconciliation. Linda Groff's *'Spirituality, Religion, Culture, and Peace: Exploring The Foundations for Inner-Outer Peace in The Twenty-First Century'* is about different spiritual and religious traditions in the world and how they have or could in the future contribute to the creation of a global culture of peace.

The present study deals with the representation of the culture of peace through novels. It focuses on more than one aspect of conflict and attempts to compare and analyse the different factors and causes of conflict and violence as reflect in the selected four novels. Also, this study hopes to prove the importance of novels in disseminating the culture of peace and nonviolence. This thesis hopes to answer what role novelists can play in helping to create and sustain a culture of peace.

Chapter Scheme

Chapter One: Introduction

This research work is divided into seven chapters. Chapter one includes an introduction to the study, its aims and objectives, significance, hypothesis, scope and limitations, and methodological review. It has a brief summary on comparative literature. It also has brief biographical notes on the four novelists—Shashi Tharoor, Louis De Bernires, Chimamanda Zgozi Adichie, and Ali Al-Muqri. It spells out the outlines of the subsequent chapters.

Chapter Two: Peace vs. Conflict: A Study

This chapter provides a general background and a detailed study on peace and conflict. It deals with the role of colonialism, imperialism in the recent conflicts and whether religion is a main factor in these conflicts or not. There seem to be various causes behind the battles and conflicts on the planet. Cultural clashes occurred throughout the course of history. Also the ideological confrontation between East and West created new problems and clashes. These issues have been invoked in refutation of the Huntington hypothesis, according to which differences of ethnic, religious and cultural identities are the ultimate determinants of conflict. Since cultural differences are so often at the heart of conflict, cultural practice needs to be at the heart of conflict resolution as well.

At the same time as a culture of peace is being promoted by UNESCO, the existence of a culture of war has also been suggested. Martin van Creveld, in his book '*The Culture of War*', observes that wars are fought mainly to expand interests, but that they also attract men and women, as can be seen from decorated instruments of war, such as weapons and uniforms. In fact, it is the culture of war that motivates people to fight on, even at the cost of their lives. This observation is quantitatively supported by Heidelberg University's Conflict Information System (CONIS) data, collected since 1945. The data identifies cultural conflicts not as those triggered by culture, but those ignited by a cultural element, such as historicity, language or religion. Such cultural conflicts have steadily been increasing since 1945 and, since 1986, have not only outpaced non-cultural conflicts, but have exceeded them significantly. The culture of war includes greed, revenge, the desire to control natural resources, as well as the need to assert identity and the imperative to fight oppression and preserve identities.

The present culture of violence based on distrust, suspicion, intolerance and hatred, on the inability to interact constructively with all those who are different, must be replaced by a new culture based on non-violence, tolerance, mutual understanding and solidarity, on the ability to solve peacefully disputes and conflicts. The world is in need of such a new culture and of a common system of values and new behavioural patterns for individuals, groups and nations, for, without them, the major problems of international and internal peace and security cannot be solved.

Chapter Three: Shashi Tharoor's *Riot:* A representation of Sociocultural Conflict

Shashi Tharoor's *Riot* (2001) narrates the plight of the individual caught in the Babri Masjid riot that historically resulted in the death of many people. Amongst the Hindus and Muslims was also found dead an American, Priscilla Hart who had come to India on a population control project. In the narration of the death of this young woman, Tharoor also brings to the fore the dark and murky side of political events that affect the lives of people. The point that Tharoor tries to make in this novel is that sociocultural conflict (the Hindu-Muslim conflict) can have disastrous repercussions on people to which none are ready to account for. Tharoor makes an attempt to convey to his readers that any conflict has its negative effects since violence leads destruction. Tharoor himself states the thematic intention in his narrative, "the eruption of a Hindu- Muslim riot leads me to raise fundamental questions about collisions between cultures, between attitudes to life, between ideologies, between religious communities and between men and women.''

Chapter Four: Louis De Bernieres's *Birds without Wings*: A representation of religious and ethical conflict

Louis de Bernières' novel *Birds without Wings* is about some Muslim and some Christian, living together in harmony, at times even sharing beliefs and customs. The story of Philothei and Ibrahim, a Christian/Muslim couple, allegorizes the ways that religious identities flex to fit life in places that permit paradox, and conversely the horror that can be wrought by imposing strict boundaries upon those accustomed to grey spaces.

Louis de Bernières traces the fortunes of one small community in southwest Turkey (Anatolia) in the early part of the last century — a quirky community in which Christian and Muslim lives and traditions have co-existed peacefully over the centuries and where friendship, even love, has transcended religious differences. But with the disintegration of the

Ottoman Empire and the onset of the Great War, the sweep of history has a cataclysmic effect on this peaceful place: Two inseparable childhood friends who grow up playing in the hills above the town suddenly find themselves on opposite sides of the bloody struggle. A new conflict arises, Muslims and Christians struggle to survive; a conflict that will reshape the whole region forever.

Chapter five: Chimamanda Zgozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*: The impact of religious fanaticism on family

Chimamanda Zgozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* is about the impact of religious fanaticism on family. According to Adichie the inner peace is more important than the outer peace; the peace inside the family is required more than outside the family. Adichie explores the effects of religious fanaticism that destroyed a family because of a catholic father who is repressive and fanatically religious at home. The wave of bloody coups and corrupt military rule that comprises Nigerian politics are touched upon in the novel through certain characters. She also examines the role of colonialism in cultural conflict.

Chapter Six: Ali Al Muqri's *The Handsome Jew:* A representation of religious fanaticism and extremism

Ali Al Muqri's *The Handsome Jew* deals with the Muslim-Jewish cultural conflict that leads to lost identity. Co-existence in seventeenth and eighteenth century Yemen, and the tension between the population of mixed faiths and sects is beautifully portrayed in this polyphonic novel. Its treatment of the theme of passion and interfaith marriage - a societal taboo - is bold, as is its title: *The Handsome Jew,* which seems to turn on its head prevalent negative stereotypes of the Jews in the Arab world. This novel is about a love that transcends the limitations of religious and ethnic differences at a time when marriage between the people of different religions was unthinkable or taboo.

Al Muqri succeeds in underlining the tension between Muslims and Jews in Yemen that escalates with every small incident, until it reaches a breaking point with the protagonists' unfolding story of marriage, birth and death, bringing the reader face to face with identity and self-determination issues.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

This chapter will compare the four novels briefly and will state the findings of this comparative study.

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